

# Introduction

## What In the Word: James

If you have done any of my previous studies, you will notice that this study looks different. There will be less guided questions and more opportunities for you to explore the Bible for yourself, considering your own questions and seeking your own answers. I am asking the Lord to give you wisdom and understanding as you seek Him in His written Word, and I would invite you to join me in that.

At the end of each lesson, there will still be 2-3 reflection questions that can also be used as small group discussion questions. I encourage you to spend time on those, engaging the Lord as you consider how He is inviting you to respond to Him based on what we are learning from the book of James over these next seven weeks.

Finally, this format is based on a previous study called *What in the Word: Making Sense of the Bible in Our Daily Lives*. If you were not part of that study, you will not be lost in this one, but you might deepen your understanding of what we are doing here if you go back and listen to the podcasts or download some of the homework. No pressure! Just know that it is an option and can be found at <https://www.codyandras.com/category/podcast/what-in-the-word-making-sense-of-the-bible-podcast/>. (In other words, you can do this study as a stand-alone, but there is an additional resource available to you if you want it!)

With all of that said, let's get started!

### Invitation

The most important step of studying the Bible is inviting the Author Himself to speak to us through His Word. Our God delights to make Himself known. Let's ask Him to do just that as we turn our attention not to knowledge or information but to Jesus.

1. Turn ahead in James to James 4:8. Write the verse below.
  
2. What does Jesus promise in these verses?
  
3. What do you believe should be your response?

We know that God is always with us, that He is present everywhere. But if your experience is anything like mine, then you also know that there are moments when we can sense His presence much more tangibly than others. I want the moments when I know His nearness and experience the peace, rest, and assurance of His presence to become more and more frequent in my life.

4. Take a moment now to confess any sins that come to mind as you come into God's presence. Then, tell God of your desire to draw near to Him and ask Him to draw near to you as well, teaching you to recognize and respond to His presence as He does.

### James: An Introduction

The next step in approaching any passage of Scripture is to *read it!* I hope this goes without saying, but sometimes we skip the most obvious steps. We tend to look at other people's faith and "want what they have" without doing the disciplined seeking of God that they have done. I am praying that this study will increase our hunger to seek God in His Word!

This week, your assignment is to read James in two translations and listen to it in one additional translation. As you select which translations to read, consider reading one more *functional* and one more *formal* translation. I would suggest a more functional one for listening!

Recall from our lesson that translations range from formal (word for word) translations to functional (thought for thought) translations. While neither is inherently "better" than the other, they have different strengths and weaknesses. You can refer back to the listening guide from our Introductory Session for a refresher on the differences.

To find alternative translations online, [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) or [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) are great places to start. I also recommend downloading the Bible App (called "Bible" and with a logo of the Holy Bible in the app store) for ease of finding other translations and listening to the scriptures.

5. The questions below will help you to orient yourself to what translations you are using based on our session together this week.
  - What translation is the Bible that you normally read from? Circle it on the chart.

- What second translation are you going to read from? Circle it on the chart as well.
- Which more functional translation are you going to listen to?



6. As you read, write down any questions that come to mind. Record your initial thoughts toward the Lord. Write out any prayers or requests you have in response to what you are reading. Directly interact with the Spirit of God (the Author of the text) as you read His Word. Be prepared to share about this experience with your small group when you meet together this week.
7. How do the different translations aid in your understanding and experience of the Bible?

### Reflection Questions

8. What has been your experience with encountering God in the Bible in the past? Has it been easy for you? Difficult? Daunting? Do you believe that He will meet you as you seek Him in His Word?
9. What do you hope to gain throughout your time in the book of James this semester?
10. If you could ask God one question as we come to the study of His Word this spring, what would you ask? Write it down and see how He might shed light on it throughout your study.